CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden

Director: Dr. HARRY JOHANSSON, Sigtuna, Sweden
Editor: Rev. JOHS. LANGHOFF, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

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DENMARK

Red-Letter Day in Church History.

November 20th, 1961, the day on which the Russian and three other Orthodox Churches were admitted to the World Council of Churches, is called a red-letter day in the annals of the Church by the Danish "Kristeligt Dagblad". In an editorial the paper notes that now practically the whole Orthodox world is part of the ecumenical fellowship, thus bringing all talk of the ecumenical movement being a union of "Reformed" denominations in Western Europe and Asia to an end. Withholding any misgivings about the political relations of these new members the Western Churches must hold out a brotherly hand to them, the "Kristeligt Dagblad" feels, concluding the editorial by saying:

"All Danish homes longing earnestly for fellowship in Christ have cause to feel pleased. Nobody knows the future. But hardly any of those deeply engaged in ecumenical work had any qualms about taking such a step. Their pleasure was quite genuine, although they certainly did not close their eyes to the problems involved."

The Common Market and the "Catholic Danger".

The current debate on Denmark's possible admission to the European Common Market has touched on, among other things, the question whether Denmark might be faced with a "Catholic danger", in as much as several of the leading countries, Italy and France in particular, are decidedly Roman Catholic.

The "Kristeligt Dagblad" deals with the matter in an editorial in which it says that fear of the Roman Catholic Church may be a healthy reaction, provided it stems from a desire to safeguard the Evangelical values of the Reformation. But the paper points out that these misgivings are expressed, not so much by Church quarters as by politically Leftist circles, the Labour movement for instance, and that, at bottom, they are afraid of a pull to the Right by the Roman Catholic Church.

"All things considered, the alleged "Catholic danger" must be said to be rather exaggerated. It is possible, even probable, that participation in the great European concert may prove a challenge to our cultural life, but a challenge is not, of course, the same as a threat. Perhaps this challenge is actually what we need.

Do not let us be hypnotized by Rome, but let us count our blessings, including those of our Lutheran Church, and let us try, undismayed, to make ourselves felt within the European fellowship which is the text of the day and a must of our time."

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"All Danish homes longing earnestly for fellowship in Christ have cause to feel pleased. Nobody knows the future. Not least any of those especially engaged in ecumenical work had any qualms about taking such a step. Their pleasure was quite genuine, although they certainly did not close their eyes to the problems involved."

The Common Market and the "Catholic Danger".

The overseas debate in Denmark's possible application to the European Common Market has touched on, among other things, the question whether Denmark ought to face this "Catholic Danger", in as much as several of the leading countries, Italy and France in particular, are decidedly Roman Catholic.

The "Kristeligt Dagblad" deals with the matter in an editorial in which it says that fear of a Roman Catholic Church may be a healthy reaction, provided it stems from a desire to safeguard the Evangelical values of the Reformation. But the paper points out that these Christian values are expressed, not as ones by Church guardians as by politically realist circles, the Labour movement for instance, and that, at bottom, they are afraid of a pull to the Right by the Roman Catholic Church.

"All things considered, the alleged "Catholic danger" must be said to be rather dead / veiled. It is possible, even probable, that Catholicism in the great European economy may prove a challenge to our culture life, but a challenge is not, of course, the same as a threat. Perhaps the challenge is actually welcome.

Do not let us be hypnotized by fears, but let us count our blessings including those of our Lutheran Church, and let us try, resolutely, to make ourselves felt within the European fellowship which is the task of the day and a must of our time."

Discussion on the Future of the Danish Missionary Council.

The future status of the Danish Missionary Council has been eagerly discussed by the various ecumenical organs of the Danish Lutheran National Church and the Danish Missionary Council following upon the integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches at New Delhi. Some quarters have advocated that the Danish Missionary Council, hitherto a joint organ of missionary societies belonging mainly to the Lutheran National Church, should become a wholly ecumenical affair, its member organizations belonging to the National Church at the same time becoming a section under the Council and charged with the joint Foreign Mission activities of the Church. The new Missionary Council should then work in close co-operation with the Ecumenical Council. Others are equally convinced that the Missionary Council ought to be a purely National Church organization, its relations with the new Missionary Commission to be set up by the World Council of Churches to be maintained by either the Ecumenical Council, half the members of which should be special Foreign Mission experts, or by the Missionary Council itself, supplemented with Foreign Mission representatives from the Free Churches.

System of Church Registers an "Administrative Muddle".

In an editorial the "Politiken", a Copenhagen Radical paper, suggests that the system of Church registers, described as being an "administrative muddle", should be abolished and births, marriages, deaths, and funerals be registered at the national registration offices. In Denmark, registrations and the issuing of certificates are handled by ministers and offices of recognized Church communities.

The "Kristeligt Dagblad" is opposed to the proposal, referring to the fact that considerably more than 90 o/o of the population belong to a recognized Church who, in case the proposal were adopted, should have to notify both a religious and a municipal office of births and deaths. Besides, such an arrangement would be more costly to the community, the paper feels sure.

FINNLAND

Bishops Appeal for Solidarity.

During the political crisis in November the Bishops of the Lutheran National Church of Finland published the following admonition to the nation in the Press:

"The present world situation makes it imperative that the Finnish nation puts aside all internal disputes and stands united about the great decisions to be made. No single group of society has any right at this moment to look to its own advantage and forget our common home country. May our goal be a Finland that is like home itself to all its citizens. The approaching Presidential election should be conducted in this spirit. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

Almost at the same time a number of Church dignitaries, including several Bishops and professors, issued an appeal for general intercession daily at 12 o'clock for deliverance from internal as well as external dangers. The reason given for the appeal is the serious world situation, the irresponsibility of youth and its abuse of alcohol, the materialistic outlook on life of the older generation, and the wanting inner strength of the Christians.

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the Christians.

In an editorial the weekly paper of the Swedish Diocese, the "Församlingsbladet", emphasizes the tremendous responsibility of preachers at this particular time when probably many more people than usual are seeking to the churches and are more responsive to the message of the Church. If the message they hear has nothing real to say to them, we must not count on their expecting to get anything from the Church if better times should come, the paper writes, It says furthermore in the article:

"Probably many people have a profound feeling of helplessness in the face of world events. We must tell them that God is the God of History. He directs the fate of the world and of our nation. Nothing can happen expect with the knowledge and permission of God. No power can do anything against His will, nor can anything separate us from Him. Not only good times come from Him. If, now and then, He lets us pass through times of adversity, God is still to be found there also. He will give us strength and courage to endure even great sufferings. In dark hours we must turn to Him and we may be certain of finding Him there, too. There is no need for a Christian to despair."

The Patriarch of Constantinople Invited to Finland.

En route to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi Archbishop Paavali of Finland paid a visit to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Athenogoras, who is spiritual Head of the Finnish Orthodox Church. This is the first time in history that the Superior of the autonomous Finnish Church has visited the Patriarch and he was received with honours by the religious leaders as well as by representatives of the secular authorities.

Archbishop Paavali invited the Patriarch to visit Finland and according to Press reports it seemed as if such a visit might be arranged.

The Patriarch was presented with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Holy Lamb by the Archbishop.

Increasing Number of Deaconesses and Parish Workers.

The diakonia activities of the Church of Finland are increasing by leaps and bounds during these years and Finland is practically the only country that is able to report an increase in the number of deaconesses. From 1955 to 1960 the number of deaconesses and parish workers rose with roughly 200 to 1,504. 559 of these were employed by parishes, 262 in diakonia institutions, 310 were in Government or municipal service, 57 worked in various associations, and 255 were retired on a pension. The number of deaconesses employed by the parishes went up from 398 in 1946 to 433 in 1954 and in 1960 reached 545.

The reason is the new rule in the Finnish Public Worship Regulation Act of 1944 which says that "all the parishes should practise Christian charity and for this purpose employ the necessary personnel". Since then a new deaconess home has been founded at Pori (Björneborg) besides the four old ones, and a training course for parish workers has been started at the Laymen's Institute at Järvenpää.

Altogether 6,000 town or district committees for diakonia activities, run by volunteers, have been established in 572 parishes, such volunteers attending meetings and courses arranged for them by the diakonia ministers Each diocese employs a full-time diakonia minister.

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President Kekkonen and Solomon's Prayer.

Speaking to the Finnish nation over the radio and on television on his return from the interview with Prime Minister Khrushchev at Novosibirsk, the Finnish President Urho Kekkonen said, among other things:

"Before setting out on my journey I received numerous letters and telegrams and encouraging greetings. I am not able to thank all my friends except, as now, over the radio and on television. Some of the letters I took with me to Novosibirsk. One of them concluded with Solomon's prayer and the words: "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor has asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgement; - behold, I have done according to thy words".

Dear listeners! Please forget that it is I who is speaking and try to understand that I am not talking of certain individuals, but of the interests and future of the whole Finnish people. With all my heart I implore you all to unite about the only possible foreign policy that may be able to secure peace and prosperity for us and our children in our beloved national country."

Religious Questionnaire to All Future Officers of the Reserve.

At the Military Academy for Officers of the Reserve at Hamina (Fredrikshamn) in Finland a recent religious inquiry revealed strong Christian leanings among the future Reserve Officers. Asked whether they found religion important 91,2 o/o answered yes. To the question whether they personally wanted to be near to God 84,5 o/o answered yes, and a surprisingly large number likewise answered yes to the question whether they believed in the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, only 7,4 o/o answering no. Three fourths of the students described their homes as being religious.

Crisis of the Sermon.

In his new book "Köynnökset pois" (Away with Festoons) Rev. Erkki Niinivaara, Rural Dean and prominent leader of the Broad Church section within the Lutheran National Church of Finland, deals with the crisis of the sermon. The reason for it is, according to Mr. Niinivaara, that the sermon generally is addressed only to those who are " inside" whereas it does not attempt to answer the pain and despair in which many people outside the circle of Christians are living. He emphasizes that the Church should "call everybody it meets", whether good or bad, righteous or unrighteous, Church-goers or non-Church-goers, to the same feast. The gospel possesses life in itself, is in constant movement, and needs not be "preserved".

"Man does not need to save himself", Rev. E. Niinivaara writes, "neither to-day, nor to-morrow, nor in all eternity. He may lift his head and with courage live the life which he has been given. Once this has been truly grasped, one may set out on the journey in a happy mood and, perhaps for the first time, with a song on one's lips."

NORWAY

Additional Ecclesiastical Service in Parishes with Women Pastors.

At their meeting in November the Bishops of the Norwegian Lutheran National Church have advocated additional ecclesiastical service in parishes with women pastors whom certain members of the parishes feel they cannot be served by for reasons of conscience. Such additional service

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MONDAY

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At their meeting in November the Bishop of the Norwegian Lutheran ...ional Church have advocated ecclesiastical service in parliament ...has with women pastors when certain members of the parishes feel they ...not be served by for reasons of conscience. Such additional service

may be extended by visiting ministers from various Church organizations, although the Bishops feel that a more regular service by the help of diocesan chaplains or neighbouring clergymen, with the consent of the rector in question, would be preferable.

It is expected that the decision, particularly aimed at the situation in the parishes of Berg and Torsken in the Diocese of North Hålogaland where the only women pastor in Norway, Mrs. Ingrid Bjerkås, is rector, will bring an end to the unrest caused by her appointment.

Laymen as Assistants at the Eucharist.

The Bishops of the Norwegian Lutheran National Church likewise advocated that laymen should be allowed to assist at Holy Communion. The general rule should be that such assistants are especially appointed, but that, in exceptional cases, the officiating clergyman should be allowed to ask a layman present at the service to assist him.

The Bishops' Conference in November further resolved to ask ministers and parish councils to investigate local desires and possibilities for conducting divine services in all church buildings every Sunday, if necessary so that certain clergymen conduct services in two churches on the same day. At the moment there are no services in several hundred churches every Sunday.

The Bishops also requested the Department for Church and Education to include, as an experiment, instruction in various philosophies and ethics on a Christian basis in vocational schools for young people. At present, such schools do not offer any instruction in religion or ethics.

Finally, the Department for Church and Education was requested to make it possible for private schools to obtain Government grants without the provision that in such cases the public authorities should appoint the teachers as this makes it virtually impossible to run a free school.

Norwegian Government on Aid to Developing Countries.

In a report to Parliament the Norwegian Government has advocated that the official Aid to Developing Countries as soon as possible should be increased to 1/4 % of the National income, which at present would equal 75 million Norwegian Crowns, the final goal to be 1 % of the National income. So far Parliament has voted 38 million Norwegian Crowns for 1962.

Encouraged by the promising experiences at the Northern training hospital in Korea the Government further advocates Northern co-operation about this Aid, and expresses approval of the suggestion that a Norwegian "peace corps" of young volunteers for work in developing countries should be established.

Finally, the Norwegian Government is pleased to note the contributions in developing countries by private organizations and feels that a number of projects are better suited for private than official handling.

Professor Ole Hallesby Dead.

The prominent Norwegian clergyman and revivalist preacher, Professor Ole Hallesby, has died, 82 years of age. For many years Professor Hallesby was a Lecturer in Systematic Theology at the Practical Seminary of the Free Faculty in Oslo and President of the revivalist

movement "Indre Mission". He was a staunch opponent of Liberal theology, fighting it in writings and speeches. The last two years of the War he spent in a German concentration camp in Norway. Large audiences flocked to hear him preach whereever he went in the Northern countries and his devotional books are among the most popular.

Treble Ordination of Bishops.

On Sunday, January 14th, 1962, a very unusual event will take place in the Cathedral of Oslo when three Bishops will be ordained at the same time. They are Dagfinn Hauge, Diocese of Tunsberg, Per Juvkam, Diocese of Björgvin (Bergen), and Monrad Norderval, Diocese of North Hålogaland.

Laestadians Contemplate Resigning From the Lutheran National Church.

The adherents of the revivalist Laestadian movement in North Norway are contemplating resigning from the Lutheran National Church, according to the newspaper "Tromsö", reporting the meeting of the Laestadians at Skibotn in November. Such a corporate resignation would probably affect 20,000 people. The reason given is that the Laestadians believe to have noted a growing Liberalization and secularization within the Lutheran National Church, "defiling the truths of the Scriptures and betraying faithfulness to the Confession". In this connection it was stressed at the meeting that "Government forces women ministers on the parishes and appoint teachers and supervisors in the Church whose views differ from the doctrines, faith, and tradition of the Church itself".

SWEDEN

Olle Herrlin Bishop of Visby.

As anounced in CN No. 77 Dean Olle Herrlin, 47 years, Uppsala, has been appointed Bishop of Visby. At the episcopal election the Dean, who is a Doctor in Theology as well as in Philosophy, obtained the highest number of votes. He and the other two candidates nominated as No. 2 and No. 3 are all known to be opposed to women ministers for which reaon certain quarters wanted Government to abstain from appointing anybody as Bishop of Visby for the time being. Government has not wanted to follow this line of policy, however.

In the Press the new Bishop has said about his position in the matter of women ministes that he will "keep in mind the rights of women, according to the law, and the best interests of the Church and the Diocese".

This diplomatic answer is heartily approved by the "Svensk Kyrkotidning", the paper interpreting it to mean that the Bishop, who is considered to belong to High Church circles, will try to act as mediator and to smooth out any divergencies.

Aid to Developing Countries and Foreign Missions.

Developments seem to prove that the Christian Foreign Missions have been able to command such respect for their work that it is simply impossible to ignore them in dealing with the problems of the so-called underdeveloped countries, Rev. Einar Rimmerfors, M.P., writes in his report in the "Svensk Veckotidning" on the official efforts in connection with the Aid to Developing countries. As in the case of the Government

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Committee reporting on the aid to these countries of the Swedish Government which included two missionary experts, two other representatives of Christian evangelization work, viz. the former missionary in India, Rev. Yngve Frykholm and Mr. Rimmerfors himself, have been nominated for the group of experts of the highest quality which, headed by the Prime Minister, is working on the inherent problems and the contents of the Aid to Developing Countries.

The same two men also sat on the special sub-committee dealing with humanitarian assistance which has recently published its report. Among other things, it gives an account of the work of Swedish Foreign Missions, emphasizing that it comprises evangelization as well as humanitarian aid. If the Missions and the official Aid to Developing Countries should agree to co-operate this would be in the humanitarian field only, of course, for instance about nursing, vocational training, and in social institutions, but would not involve any demand that the Missions should abstain from evangelizational activities which are their main concern.

In his article Mr. Rimmerfors expresses the hope that Foreign Missions will be represented on the proposed Board of ten members which is to administrate the Government Aid, as well as in the Council of 50 which is to support the Board. Mrs. Ulla Lindström, Member of the Cabinet, said nothing about this, however, at the time of bringing in her proposal for the organization of the Aid in Parliament.

Sunday School Becomes Saturday School.

In the small Swedish town of Nora three of the Sunday schools have been changed into "Saturday schools". For some time it has been increasingly difficult to get the children together on Sunday mornings, and at a meeting for the parents of the children it turned out that by far the greater majority were in favour of changing the time of Sunday school to Saturday afternoon, a change which has proved most successful. The programme on Saturday is the same as the usual one on Sunday morning.

May Teachers be Roman Catholic?

Several Swedish newspapers have expressed their opposition to allowing Roman Catholics to teach religion in the public schools as there is no wish to have the children exposed to Catholic influence. The actual reason for this statement is the news that Dr. Stig Lindholm, Lecturer, who recently converted to the Roman Church, intends to continue teaching religion at the Public Training College at Uppsala. The "Aftonbladet" in Stockholm considers it a threat to the freedom of religion of the pupils if they are taught by a Roman Catholic since nobody is able to teach such a subject without being personally engaged in it.

The weekly "Vår Kyrka", published by the Home Mission Board of the Swedish Church, on the other hand, maintains that instruction in Christianity may be, and ought to be, given objectively even if the instructor is personally engaged in his subject, and considers it a breach of freedom of religion to deny a Roman Catholic the right to teach religion.

mittee reporting on the aid to these countries of the Swedish Go-
rnment which included two missionary experts, two other representa-
Christian evangelization work, viz. the former missionary in India,
. Ingve Frykholm and Mr. Rimmerfors himself, have been nominated to
a group of experts of the highest quality which, headed by the Prime
nister, is working on the inherent problems and the contents of the
to Developing Countries.

The same two men also sat on the special sub-committee dealing wi
manitarian assistance which has recently published its report. Amon
her things, it gives an account of the work of Swedish Foreign Mis-
ons, emphasizing that it comprises evangelization as well as humani-
rian aid. If the Missions and the official Aid to Developing Countr-
s should agree to co-operate this would be in the humanitarian fiel
ly, of course, for instance about nursing, vocational training, agri
ocial institutions, but would not involve any demand that the Mis-
ns should abstain from evangelistical activities which are their
n concern.

In his article Mr. Rimmerfors expresses the hope that Foreign Mis
ns will be represented on the proposed Board of ten members which i
dministrate the Government Aid, as well as in the Council of 50
on is to support the Board. Mrs. Ulla Lindström, Member of the Ga-
et, said nothing about this, however, at the time of bringing in he
posal for the organization of the Aid in Parliament.

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